CHAPTER XI

THE TRANSFORMATION WROUGHT BY THE IMPACT OF THE OCCIDENT

PARTIAL RECOVERY FROM THE SHOCKS OF THE PRECEDING Two DECADES: THE RESTORATION OF INTERNAL ORDER BUT THE SLOW PERMEATION OF THE EMPIRE BY OCCIDENTAL TRADE AND IDEAS (A.D. 1861-1893)

IN 1861 it looked as though the Ch'ing dynasty might have but very little longer to live. A child was on the throne, there were dissensions at court, the Empire had just been defeated and its capital taken by foreign foes, and rebellions were wasting some of the fairest provinces. Not since the revolts in the early years of the reign of K'ang Hsi, and perhaps not even then> had the Manchus' tenure of power been so precarious. From this impending doom the dynasty was saved temporarily by an interesting combination of circumstances and its demise postponed for half a century.

THE EMPRESS DOWAGER, TZ'u HSI

First of all, new leadership emerging from the Manchus gave fresh vigor to the Ch'ing. The mother of Hsien Feng's heir proved to be one of those remarkable women who at irregular intervals have forced themselves into the virtual rulership of the Empire. She* is usually best known either as the Empress Dowager, by an official designation Tz'u Hsi, or by a nickname popular among her entourage and in the North, the Old Buddha. A member of the Yehonala clan of the Manchus, and of an excellent family, she was

chosen as a secondary wife to Hsien Feng and had the good fortune to win his affection by her beauty and charm and by bearing him his heir. Upon Hsien Feng's death, by vigorous action and the assistance of a lifelong friend and trusted adviser, Jung-lu, and of Prince Kung, a brother of Hsien Feng, she got the better of a